

An overview of Wahhabism by

Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad Zayni Dahlan ash-Shafi'i al-Ash'ari al-Makki



By: Shaykh al Islam Ahmad Zayni Dahlan (translation by As-Sunnah Foundation)

MV Editor's Note: An opinion piece we published that touched on the matter of Wahabism and Saudi Arabia drew several comment storms on our Facebook page. In moderating the discussions (to use a charitable term) we found many people were simply ignorant of basic facts regarding Wahhabism. We found also that many commentators seem to be Wahhabis (we define a Wahabi as a Muslim whose creed agrees with that of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhab in the many matters where he deviated from mainstream Sunni creed as embodied by the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools). Those commentators voiced disapproval of the fact that the piece was apparently written by non-Muslims and claimed that Wahhabism is nothing but "Quran and Sunnah".

For the benefit of our readers, and since this is a grave matter connected to deadly past and modern forms of terrorism within Muslim lands especially, we republish this excellent work by the 19th century Shafi'i Mufti of Makkah, Shaykh al Islam Ahmad Zayni Dahlan (circa 1816 – 1886) translated by the dedicated slaves of Allah at Sunnah.org and originally titled "The Wahabi Tribulation".

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

We would also like our readers to know that these are scholarly and theological matters – we have no ill-will towards the nation or people of Saudi Arabia whom, like the rest of the Ummah, are always in our prayers. Yet we do hope that they will be guided away from the errors of Wahhabism.

Introduction

During the reign of Sultan Salim III (1204-1222 AH) many tribulations took place. One was the tribulation of the Wahhabiyyah which started in the area of al-Hijaz(1) where they captured al-Haramayn(2), and prevented Muslims coming from ash-Sham(3) and Egypt from reaching their destination to perform Pilgrimage (Hajj). Another tribulation is that of the French who controlled Egypt from 1213 A.H. until 1216 A.H. Let us here speak briefly about the two adversities(4), because each was mentioned in detail in the books of history and in separate treatises.

Background on The Tribulations of the Wahhabis

The fighting started between the Wahhabis and the Prince of Mecca, Mawlana Sharif Ghalib Ibn Bu Sa'id, who had been appointed by the honored Muslim Sultan as his ruling representative over the areas of al-Hijaz. This was in 1205 AH during the time of Sultan Salim III, the son of Sultan Mustafa III, the son of Ahmad. Previous to the outbreak of fighting, the Wahhabis began to build power and gain followers in their areas. As their territories expanded, their evil and harm increased they killed countless numbers of Muslims, legitimated confiscating their money and possessions, and captured their women. The founder of their wicked doctrine was Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab, who originated from eastern Arabia, from the tribe of Banu Tamim. He lived a long life, about one-hundred years. He was born in 1111 AH and died in 1200 AH. His history was narrated as follows:

Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab started as a student of knowledge in the city of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam: Medina al-Munawwarah. Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab's father was a good, pious man among the people of knowledge as was his brother, Shaykh Sulayman. His father, his brother, and his shaykhs (teachers of religion) had the foresight Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab would innovate a great deal of deviation and misguidance, because of their observance of his sayings, actions, and inclinations concerning many issues. They used to reprimand him and warn people against him.

Some of the Beliefs of Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab

What Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab's father, brother, and shaykhs speculated about him came true-by the Will of Allah, Ta'ala. Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab innovated deviant and misleading ways and beliefs and managed to allure some ignorant people to follow him. His deviant and misleading ways and beliefs disagreed with the sayings of the scholars of the Religion. His deviant beliefs led him to label the

believers as blasphemers! He falsely claimed visiting the grave of the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and performing the *tawassul*(5) by him as *shirk*(6). Additionally, he falsely claimed visiting the graves of other prophets and righteous Muslims (*awliya'*) and performing *tawassul* by them was *shirk* as well. He added to this by saying, “To call upon the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, when performing *tawassul* by the Prophet is *shirk*.” He passed the same judgment of *shirk* on the ones who call upon other prophets and righteous Muslims (*awliya'*) in performing *tawassul* by them.

In an effort to give credibility to his innovations Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab embellished his sayings by quotations which he selected from Islamic sources, i.e., quotations which are used as proofs for many issues but not the issues which Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab was attempting to support. He brought false statements and tried to beautify them for the laymen until they followed him. He wrote treatises for them until they believed that most of the People of *Tawhid*(7) were blasphemers.

Alliance With The Saudi Family

Moreover, Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab called upon the princes of eastern Arabia and the people of ad-Dar’iyyah(8) to support him. They carried his doctrine and made this endeavor a means to strengthen and expand their kingdom. They worked together to suppress the Bedouins of the deserts until they overcame them and those Bedouins followed them and became foot-soldiers for them without pay. After that, these masses started to believe that whoever does not believe in what Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab said is a blasphemer, and it is Islamically lawful (*halal*) to shed his blood and plunder his money.

The matter of Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab started to evidence itself in 1143 A.H. and began spreading after 1150 A.H. Subsequently, the scholars—even his brother, Shaykh Sulayman and the rest of his shaykhs— authored many treatises to refute him. But Muhammad Ibn Su’ud, the Prince of ad-Dar’iyyah in eastern Arabia, supported him and worked to spread his ideology. Ibn Su’ud was from Banu Hanifah, the people of Musaylimah al-Kadhdhab(9). When Muhammad Ibn Su’ud died, his son ‘Abdul-‘Aziz Ibn Muhammad Ibn Su’ud took over the responsibility of fulfilling the vile task of spreading the Wahhabi beliefs.

Many of the shaykhs of Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab in Medina used to say, “He will be misguided, and he will misguide those for whom Allah willed the misguidance.” Things took place as per the speculation of the scholars. Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab claimed his intention behind the madhhab he invented was “to purify the *Tawhid*” and “repudiate the *shirk*.” He also claimed people had been following the *shirk* for six-hundred years and he revived their Religion for them!!

The Methodology of Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab

Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab took the verses revealed to speak about the blasphemers and applied them to the Muslims. The following examples from the Qur’an illustrate this point. Allah, ta’ala, said in Surat al-Ahqaf, Ayah 5:

Who is more astray than the one who performs supplication (du’a’) to [worship] other than Allah; the one other than Allah he supplicates to will not answer his du’a’.

Allah, ta’ala said in Surat Yunus, Ayah 106 :

“Do not perform supplication (du’a’) to [worship] other than Allah; the one other than Allah you supplicate to will not benefit you and will not harm you”

The verses in the Qur’an similar to these ones are numerous. Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab gravely misinterpreted the previously cited verses and said: “The Muslim who asks help from the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, other prophets, or the righteous people (*salihun*), or who calls or asks any of them for intercession is like those blasphemers mentioned in the Qur’an.” According to the false claim of Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab, the Muslims who do these things are blasphemers.

He also considered visiting the grave of Prophet Muhammad and the graves of other prophets and righteous Muslims for blessings as blasphemy. Allah revealed Ayah 3 of Surat az-Zumar in reference to the *mushrikun*:

Those who worship the idols said: “We do not worship them except to achieve a higher status from Allah.” Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab falsely stated: “Those who perform *tawassul* (asking Allah by the prophets, for example) are similar to those blasphemers mentioned in Surat az-Zumar, Ayah 3, who claim they do not worship the idols except to achieve a higher status from Allah.” He said: “The blasphemers did not believe the idols create anything; they believed Allah is the Creator.” He gave his version of proof from the Qur’an by citing Surat Luqman, Ayah 25 and Surat az-Zumar, Ayah 38, in which Allah said: *If you ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and earth?’ They will say, ‘Allah’.* In Surat az-Zukhruf, Ayah 87, Allah said:

If you ask them, ‘Who created them?’ They will say, ‘Allah’. Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab falsely concluded from these verses that the Muslims who perform *tawassul* are similar to those blasphemers.

The Scholars Refute Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab

In their writings to refute Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab’s sayings, the scholars said his deduction was false. The believers did not consider the prophets or the *awliya’* as gods and they did not deem them partners to Allah. Instead, they correctly believe the prophets and *awliya’* are good slaves and creations of Allah, and they do not deserve to be worshipped.

The blasphemers intended in these verses believed their idols deserved Godhood. They exalted them as one would exalt his Creator, even though they believed the idols did not create the heavens and the earth. The believers, on the other hand, do not believe the prophets or righteous Muslims (*awliya'*) deserve to be worshipped, nor do they deserve to be attributed with Godhood, nor do they exalt them as one would exalt God. They believe these people are good slaves of Allah, His beloved ones whom He chose, and by their blessings (*barakah*) Allah grants His mercy to His creation. Hence, when the slaves of Allah seek the blessings (*barakah*) of the prophets and righteous Muslims (*awliya'*) they are seeking these blessings as a mercy from Allah.

There are many proofs and examples from the Qur'an and Sunnah about this basic belief of the Muslims. Muslims believe Allah is the Creator, the One Who grants benefit and inflicts harm, and the only One Who deserves to be worshipped. Muslims believe that no one other than Allah has the power to affect the creation. The prophets and righteous people do not create anything. They do not possess the power to bestow benefit or inflict harm on others, but Allah is the One Who bestows the mercy upon the slaves by the righteous Muslims' blessings.

Hence, the belief of the blasphemers, i.e., the belief their idols deserve to be worshipped and have Godhood, is what makes them fall into blasphemy. This saying of the blasphemers, as previously cited in Surat az-Zumar, Ayah 3, was said in an effort to justify their belief when they were disproved and shown idols do not deserve to be worshipped.

How can Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab and those who follow him find it permissible to equate the believers, who believed in *Tawhid*, to those blasphemers, who believed in the Godhood of the idols? All the previously cited verses and the verses which are similar to them are specific to the blasphemers who associate partners with Allah—none of the believers are included.

Al-Bukhari narrated by the route of Ibn 'Umar, may Allah raise their ranks, that the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, described the Khawarij as those who took the verses revealed about the blasphemers and attributed them to the believers! In the narration by the route of Ibn 'Umar the Prophet said:

“What I fear most for my nation is a man who mis-explains the Qur'an and takes it out of context.”

Proofs For Tawassul – The Permissibility of Asking Allah for things by some of His Creation

If performing *tawassul* had been blasphemy, then the believers, i.e., the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, his Companions, and the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* of this nation would not have done it. Yet it is mentioned in the *sahih* hadith of the Prophet that the Prophet used to ask Allah by saying:

“O Allah, I ask You by the status of those who ask You.(10) “

Without doubt, this is *tawassul*. The Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to teach this supplication (*du'a*) to his Companions and order them to say it. This issue was expounded upon in different books and treatises refuting Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab.

There is a hadith related by al-Hakim that mentions after Adam ate from the tree, he performed *tawassul* by our Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. He did that, because he saw the name of the Prophet written on the 'Arsh, Adam said: "O Allah, by the dignity of this son [Muhammad], forgive this father [Adam]."

It was also related by Ibn Hibban, that upon the death of Fatimah Bint Asad, may Allah raise her rank, the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, with his own honorable hands, put her in her grave and said:

"O Allah, forgive my mother(11), Fatimah Binti Asad, and widen her place by the status of Your Prophet and the prophets who came before me. You are the most Merciful."

There is a hadith classified as *sahih*(12), that a blind man asked the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, to make a supplication (*du'a*) to Allah to return his sight. The Prophet ordered him to make ablution (*wudu'*) and pray two *rak'ahs* and then say:

"O Allah, I ask You and direct myself to You by Your Prophet, Muhammad, the Prophet of Mercy. O Muhammad, I ask Allah by you to fulfill my need. O Allah, enable him to intercede for me."

The blind man did what the Prophet taught him to do(13) and Allah brought his sight back. Moreover, as related by at-Tabarani, the *tawassul* made by the blind man was used by the Companions and *Salaf* after the death of the Prophet.

'Umar Ibn al-Khattab performed the *tawassul* by al-'Abbas (the uncle of the Prophet), may Allah reward their deeds, when he prayed the *Salah* of 'Istisqa'(14) with the people. There are other proofs mentioned in the books of the Islamic scholars but we will not recount them at length here.

The one who pursues the saying of the Companions and their followers will find a great deal of proof about the validity of calling the prophet by saying "O Muhammad" in his presence as well as in his absence and in his life as well as after his death. In fact, many texts include the phrase which means, "O Muhammad". Calling the name of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is permissible. An example is the saying of the Companion, Bilal Ibn al-Harith, may Allah reward his deeds, when he went to the grave of the Prophet. He said: "O Messenger of Allah, ask Allah to send rain to your Nation." His saying contains this format(15).

Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Sulayman al-Kurdi(16) was among the authors who wrote refuting Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab. He was Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab’s own shaykh. Among what he said is as follows:

O Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab, I advise you, for the sake of Allah, ta’ala, to hold your tongue regarding the Muslims. If you hear from anyone who asks for help from other than Allah that one has the power to effect things without the Will of Allah, then teach him the right thing about this issue, and show him the proofs which state no one other than Allah brings things from non-existence into existence. The one who rejects that is blasphemous. You have no right to label the majority of the Muslims as blasphemers(17) while you are deviant from the majority of the Muslims. In fact, it is more reasonable to consider the one who deviates from the majority of the Muslims as a blasphemer then to consider the Muslims as a nation as blasphemers—because the deviant one has followed a path other than the path of the believers. In Surat an-Nisa’, Ayah 15, Allah said:

Whomever contends with the Messenger after the right path was exposed to him and follows other than the way of the believers, Allah will leave him to whatever he followed and put him in Hell (Jahannam)].

The Permissibility of Visiting The Grave of the Prophet

Visiting the grave of the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was performed by the Companions and the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* who came after them. Many hadiths cite the benefit of this deed and the scholars of Islam have written books about this matter(18).

Calling On Someone Other Than Allah

Among of what was mentioned concerning calling on someone other than Allah, whether that one is present, absent, dead or alive, is the saying of the Prophet:

“If the animal of anyone of you went out of control in the wilderness, then call: ‘O slaves of Allah, help me’”, since there are slaves of Allah [i.e. the angels] who will respond to him.

There is another hadith related by al-Bazzar in which the Prophet said:

“If one of you lost something or needs help while in an open land, then let him say:
“O slaves of Allah, help me.”

Another narration says, “Rescue me, because Allah has created slaves whom you do not see.” When traveling at nightfall the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, used to say:” O earth, my Lord and your Lord is Allah.” When the Prophet visited the grave of Muslims, he used to say:”O people of the graves, peace be upon you.”

In the *Tashahhud* in *as-Salah* the Muslim says: “O Prophet of Allah, may Allah protect you from infirmities, and have mercy and blessings on you.”

There is no harm in calling on and performing *tawassul* by someone unless one believes that someone other than Allah actually creates things. Hence, as long as one believes that only Allah creates them, there is no harm in performing *tawassul*. Likewise, attributing a certain doing to other than Allah does not harm unless one believes this doer actually creates. So once it is established the person does not believe the creating is for other than Allah then attributing a doing to other than Allah is understood in its proper context. When one says: “This medicine benefited me,” or “This particular righteous Muslim benefited me,” he is merely exposing the created reason of the benefit. These statements are also similar to when one says: “This food satisfied my hunger,” or “This water quenched my thirst,” or “This medicine cured me.” When Muslims say such statements, they understand them in their proper context, i.e., food, water, and medicine are only reasons, and Allah is the Creator of their benefit.

The general proofs mentioned in this summary are enough to refute Ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab. The scholars of Islam have expounded on this issue in several treatises.

Footnotes:

1. Al-Hijaz refers to the western part of Arabia which includes Mecca and Medina.
2. Al-Haramayn refers to Mecca and Medina.
3. Ash-Sham refers to the area that includes Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.
4. Only the first adversity will be presented in this booklet.
5. *Tawassul* is asking Allah for goodness by a prophet, righteous believer, etc.
6. *Shirk* refers to associating partners to Allah.
7. The People of *Tawhid* refers to the Muslims.
8. Ad-Dar’iyyah is a region north of the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
9. Musaylimah al-Kadhdhab was a blasphemous man who claimed the status of prophethood for 10 himself after the death of Prophet Muhammad. He was killed by the Muslims during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may Allah raise his rank.
10. Ibn Majah and others related this hadith and the-Hafidh, Ibn Hajar, deemed it a strong hadith
11. The Prophet called her ‘my mother’ out of likening her to his real mother.
12. Sixteen hafidhs of hadith classified this hadith as sahih, including at-Tirmidhi, at-Tabarani, al-Bayhaqi, as-Subki, among others.
13. It is clear in the narrations of this hadith, the blind man was not in the session of the Prophet when he did as the Prophet ordered him.
14. *Salah* of ‘*Istisqa*’ refers to performing a specific prayer which includes making supplication for rain.
15. Al-Bayhaqi related this hadith and classified it as *sahih*.
16. Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Sulaym al-Kurdi was the one who wrote al-Hashiyah on the explanation of Ibn Hajar to the text of *Bafadl*.
17. It is mentioned in a hadith it is easier for the devil to trick the lonely person who is away from other Muslims. The Prophet, sallallahu al ‘alayhi wa sallam, while encouraging the Muslims to perform the prayers in congregation said: “Moreover, the wolf will eat the lonely lamb.”
18. Among these hadiths is the one related by ad-Daraqutni that the Prophet said: “On the Day of Judgment, I will intercede for the one who visits my grave with the good intention.”

Peace and Blessings upon the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions